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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the development and evolution of a Career Development program in effect for the past 20 years at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. The Career Life and Planning (CLP) course is offered as a two semester hour class, with emphasis on career preparation via development of a resume and practicing the job interview through simulated interviews. The course format follows a sequential process approach. Graduate student facilitators implement structured exercises in small groups. The program director continually keeps the course current by attending career conferences, reviewing pertinent literature, and evaluating the program's effectiveness. Over the years, the CLP format has been adopted across a variety of settings and age groups. Most recently the model has been applied to minority populations. While the course format has been modified based on the target population, the basic essentials of successful career planning and preparedness remain the hallmark of the course, namely: (1) self-knowledge; (2) exploring career options; (3) career decision-making; (4) resume preparation; (5) job interviewing skills; and (6) lifelong career options. Career counselors gain a high level of expertise in the career planning process through continuing education in vocational testing, personality assessment, and familiarity with career guidance. (LLL)

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The Evolution of a Career Development Program

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Running head: CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This paper discusses the development and evolution of a Career Development program in effect for the past 20 years at the University of West Florida in Pensacola. The program format involves coursework, workshops, or lectures and focuses on the essentials of Career Development, namely, self-appraisal, career decision-making, and job-search skills. In addition to providing an experiential format for undergraduates, the career program has been adapted for high school students, adults in the community, and minority students. Implications for career counselors are discussed.

The Evolution of a Career Development Program

One critical goal of counselors and professionals in higher education is the facilitation of career and life development (Chapman, 1978; Walsh & Osipow, 1990). In times of limited resources, an efficient avenue for implementing career planning instruction and services to students is a career and life planning program. One such program has been developed by the counseling faculty and staff at the University of West Florida (UWF) in Pensacola. This program, entitled Career and Life Planning (CLP), mainly consists of a two semester hour course with the focus on careers and life planning. Academic courses that assist individuals with career and life planning have been demonstrated to be quite effective (Keller, Mayfield, & Piotrowski, 1983). The purpose of this paper is to trace the history and overall development of this model CLP course which has been part of the curriculum at UWF since 1971.

The Career and Life Planning course is offered as a two semester hour class at UWF, with emphasis on career preparation via development of a resume and practicing the job interview via simulated interviews. Development of these imperative skills increases the employment prospects of graduates. The course format follows a sequential process approach which begins with self-knowledge and ends with the job interview (see Keller,

Mayfield, & Piotrowski, 1983). Graduate student facilitators are paid from a CLP budget to implement structured exercises in small groups. The program director continually keeps the course current by attending career conferences, reviewing pertinent literature, and evaluating the program's effectiveness (e.g., Keller, Piotrowski, & Rabold, 1990).

GROWTH OF THE PROGRAM

In 1971, the Vice-president for Academic Affairs at UWF appointed a member of the counseling faculty as director of a "Career and Life Planning" program. The director developed an academic course titled Career and Life Planning with the initial emphasis of the course primarily being on Life Planning. Enrollment in those initial classes sometimes numbered over 100 eager upper-classmen, with all participants completing the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory. A portion of class time was devoted to small group work facilitated by graduate assistants. One example of a group exercise was to have each participant project 5 or 10 years into his/her life and describe a typical day with as many details as possible.

The format for this Career and Life Planning course was shared with other professionals interested in career planning. A training workshop was designed and conducted by the CLP director and his facilitators. Since CLP was a relatively new concept

many professionals and educators of colleges and universities attended the three day workshop. One outcome of this workshop was that a number of participants initiated CLP courses throughout the state of Florida. Feedback from these courses has been quite positive over the past two decades.

Interest in UWF's Career and Life Planning program has been nationwide. In fact, course materials were requested from over 200 colleges and universities. It was rather evident that Career Planning was a popular issue around the country.

EXPANSION OF THE PROGRAM

Over the years, the CLP format has been adopted across a variety of settings and age groups. Most recently the model has been applied to minority (university, college, and high school) populations. While the course format has been modified based on the target population, the basic essentials of successful career planning and preparedness remain the hallmark of the course; namely,

* Self-Knowledge

    A) Develop a career personality profile which specifies personality characteristics that are pertinent to careers versus overall personality traits (e.g., liking outdoors versus honesty).

B) This self-knowledge comes from a variety of sources such as:

1) Self-report exercises.

2) Adjective check list.

3) Feedback from significant others.

4) Feedback from the small group members.

* Exploring Career Options

A) Visit a career lab.

B) Read the most recent Occupational Outlook Handbook.

C) Talk with persons in the field.

D) Spend a day observing a worker in the field.

E) Complete an exercise such as writing down 10 careers that come to your mind.

F) Take a standardized test like the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory.

G) Have small group members write down careers that fit other members.

* Career Decision-Making

A) Decide on several careers that fit the career personality profile and/or life plan (see Phillips & Strohmer, 1983; Rubinton, 1980).

B) Tentatively choose one career as the focus of the resume.

* Resume Preparation
    A) Produce an attractive resume using a reverse chronological format.
    B) Encourage exposure to experiences that enhance resume for an intended career (i.e., relevant volunteer experiences).
* Job Interviewing Skills
    A) Use effective communication skills.
        1) Listening.
        2) Equal eye contact.
        3) Matching voice tones.
    B) Videotape a practice interview.
    C) Obtain feedback on the video interview.
* Lifelong Career Options
    A) Decide on several long-term career options based on previous steps.
    B) Once settled in a specific career, be simultaneously preparing for a new career (see Keller, 1985).

One of the first applications of the CLP approach was implemented with middle school students (seventh graders). Teachers were instructed on the fundamentals of career planning and led students in discussion groups concerning various careers. Guided imagery techniques were used, which made the career

selection process "adventurous." On another occasion, the staff had the opportunity to apply the CLP techniques in a workshop with middle-age adults. Many of these individuals were either considering a job/career change or were concerned with upgrading skills to current occupational demands. The sharing of these concerns in a group setting greatly relieved anxiety and facilitated acceptance of the challenge of self-growth. Over the past decade the CLP Director has been asked to present CLP lectures, presentations, and one-day workshops to community groups.

In 1985, with the addition of freshmen and sophomores at UWF, it was decided to teach a course in Career and Life Planning to all incoming freshmen. While the course is now called Student Orientation, an emphasis on tentative career decision-making still exists (Branyon & Piotrowski, 1988).

In the early 1980's, with an increasing enrollment of Black students at UWF, a Career Planning seminar held during Black History Month proved most fruitful. Some of the particular needs of Black students were determined in a campus-wide survey and the desire for information and skills in career preparation was a major concern. Several years later, a tailor-made version of the CLP format was developed and applied specifically to Black college-age students. More recently, we assessed the career

planning needs of Black university students and found that their concerns and attitudes toward career preparation equaled those of their White counterparts on campus (Piotrowski & Keller, 1990). Currently, a Career Planning program for aspiring Black high school students is in progress.

It should be stressed that the essentials of career planning are the mainstay of the program, i.e., self-appraisal, career-decision-making, and preparation for occupation-entry. On the other hand, the utilization of a process-approach makes career counseling a truly rewarding and enjoyable experience (Barker, 1981; Ware & Matthews, 1980). The feedback from participants has been most remarkable over the 20 year span of the program. Many former students have been grateful for the positive influence that the program has had on their career development.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CAREER COUNSELOR

Career counselors need to have comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the many facets of the career planning process. Moreover, an extensive knowledge of career guidance materials and sources is mandatory (Zunker, 1990). Career counselors gain a high level of expertise in these areas through continuing education in vocational testing, personality assessment, and familiarity with career guidance. Intimate knowledge in these areas is deemed critical. It is clear, therefore, that

competence in general counseling techniques needs to frequently include career guidance.

With increased emphasis on personal fulfillment in society, it is important that individuals continue to be aware of specific careers that are obtainable. Hopefully, the decisions resulting from career counseling will contribute to the self- realization process. It is the responsibility of career counselors to facilitate that realization.

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